

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-60 are pending in this application. Claims 1-17, 19-23, 27-51, and 53-56 are withdrawn, Claims 2, 18, 26, 52, and 57 are amended, and new Claims 59 and 60 are added by the present amendment. As amended Claims 2, 18, 26, 52, and 57 and new Claims 59 and 60 are supported by the original disclosure,¹ no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claims 18, 24, 25, and 52 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Ohno et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 20020145788, herein Ohno); Claim 52 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Takeshita et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,088,146, herein Takeshita); Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ohno; Claims 57 and 58 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Takeshita in view of Yamaguchi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,801,746, hereinafter Yamaguchi).

Initially, applicants and applicants' representative thank Primary Examiner Cherry and Examiner Khatri for the interview held on March 7, 2006 to discuss the present case. During the interview, differences between the claimed invention and the cited references were discussed in detail, and amendments as submitted herein were discussed to clarify the discussed differences. The Examiners agreed that the claims as amended herein overcome the objection and rejections of record.

With regard to the objection to Claim 26, Claim 18 is amended to recite "a beam merging unit," and the recitation of "a beam merging unit" is deleted from Claim 26. Further Claim 26 is amended to recite "a plurality of pre-deflection imaging units each located on one

¹See, e.g., the specification at page 36, lines 13-22 and Figures 16-18.

of the optical axes between the light source units and the deflection unit.” Accordingly, the objection to Claim 26 is believed to be overcome.

With regard to the rejection of Claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Ohno, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended Claim 10 recites in part, “a deflection unit that deflects the light beams together *in a single plane at an angle with respect to the light beams* and scans the light beams along a second direction perpendicular to the first direction.”

In contrast, Ohno describes an optical scanner assembly where light beams L_1 and L_2 are incident on two different surfaces of polygon mirror 5, which surfaces are at an angle to one another.² Accordingly, Ohno does not teach or suggest “a deflection unit that deflects the light beams together in a *single plane* at an angle with respect to the light beams and scans the light beams along a second direction perpendicular to the first direction,” as recited in amended Claim 18. As Ohno does not teach or suggest each and every element of Claim 18, Claim 18 (and Claims 24-26, 59, and 60 dependent therefrom) is not anticipated by Ohno and is patentable thereover.

As Claim 52 recites similar elements to Claim 18, Claim 52 is patentable over Ohno for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 18.

With regard to the rejection of Claim 52 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Takeshita, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended Claim 52 recites in part, “a beam merging unit configured to turn at least one of the light beams at a different position, wherein a distance from a turning point on the beam merging unit to a deflection point on the deflection unit decreases for each consecutive light beam along the first direction.”

²See e.g. Ohno, Figure 4.

The outstanding Office Action cited reflecting mirrors 25 and 26 of Takeshita as “a beam merging unit” as recited in Claim 52.³ However, as shown in Figure 7 of Takeshita, a distance from a turning point on mirrors 25 and 26 to a deflection point on polygon mirror 1 *does not* decrease for each consecutive light beam along the first direction. Further, Takeshita does not describe or suggest the above described feature either. Accordingly, Claim 52 is patentable over Takeshita.

With regard to the rejection of Claim 57 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Takeshita in view of Yamaguchi, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 57 also recites “a beam merging unit configured to turn at least one of the light beams at a different position, wherein a distance from a turning point on the beam merging unit to a deflection point on the deflection unit decreases for each consecutive light beam along the first direction.” Yamaguchi has not been cited as teaching this element,⁴ and it is respectfully submitted that Yamaguchi does not describe or suggest this feature. Consequently, Claim 57 (and Claim 58 dependent therefrom) are patentable over Takeshita in view of Yamaguchi.

New Claims 59 and 60 are supported at least by the specification at page 36, lines 13-22 and Figures 16-18. As new Claims 59 and 60 depend from Claim 18, Claims 59 and 60 are believed to be patentable for at least the reasons described above with respect to Claim 18. Further, Claims 59 and 60 also recite features that are not taught or suggested by the cited references. Thus, Claims 59 and 60 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

³See the outstanding Office Action at page 5, lines 12-13.

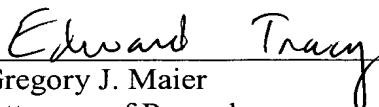
⁴See the outstanding Office Action at page 8, lines 1-2.

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Accordingly, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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